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CHRISTIAN AIMS AND INSTRUMENTALITIES.

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SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

INDUCTION OF REV. C. H. A. DALL

TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE

FIRST RELIGIOUS SOCIETY IN NEEDHAM,

FEBRUARY 7, 1847.

BY REV. JASON WHITMAN.

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SERMON.

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1 Peter i. 9.

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Our New-England towns and villages are marked by an imposing array of religious instrumentalities; in their houses of worship, in their various religious organizations, in the residence and labors of a Christian ministry. Sometimes these instrumentalities have been idolized, while the end, for the accomplishment of which they are appointed, has been overlooked. And then again, on the other hand, they have been undervalued and neglected. I propose, therefore, at this time, to occupy your attention by an endeavor to point out what is ultimate and final in religion, to mark the distinction between the end to be sought, and the instrumentalities appointed for its attainment, and to show in what way these instrumentalities are subsidiary and efficient.

What then is ultimate and final in religion? In other words what is the ultimate object, at which we should aim in regard to ourselves as individuals, in our endeavors to accomplish in our own hearts and lives the true purposes of the Gospel; and what is the state into which we should seek to bring the community, in order that it may be in reality and in all respects truly a Christian community? In regard to ourselves, I answer that we should seek to bring our souls into a childlike frame, into a state of entire consecration to the service of God, and of perfect oneness of feeling and affection with his holy will, into a state of conscious, sincere loyalty to the Supreme Jehovah, into a state of perfect love, of perfect faith, and of perfect devotion of heart and of life. I sincerely believe that a higher and richer experience of the power and of the joy of religion than most men imagine or desire, which should be sought by every true Christian, and which, if sought with the same diligence, earnestness and perseverance with which men seek for the treasures of earth, may, through God's blessing, be attained. It is a state of entire subordination of our own wishes, plans and purposes to the will of God; in which we shall feel that God is all in all, and that we are only instruments in his hand; and in which we shall desire only to be instruments for the accomplishment of his wise and holy purposes. It is a state in which, with our Saviour, it will be our meat and our drink, that which will give us spiritual nourishment and strength, to do the will of our Father which is in heaven, in which our only prayer, in regard to ourselves, will be "Lord, what wouldst thou have us to do?" and in which our ultimate prayer will be,

"Father, thy will be done," even though we be cast aside from all active agency in its accomplishment.

In this state of the soul there will be great calmness of spirit, great joy and peace in believing. There will be an almost distinct spiritual perception of the presence of an all-surrounding God. We sée him in every thing. We touch him at every point. The heavens declare the glory of God. Every beautiful tint upon the flower, every sound of melody, every manifestation of life in the vegetable world, or of enjoyment in the animal, speaks to us of the wisdom and goodness of an ever present Creator. Indeed, the whole beautiful creation, with all its variety and all its sublimity, becomes to us but the spirit vesture, the sensible form, through which the ever-present but unseen Spirit manifests himself to our spirits.

In this state of the soul we shall see God in every event of Providence; in all the multiplied blessings of life, and in the saddening afflictions we are sometimes called to endure, we shall perceive that it is God that speaks, and speaks, alike in both, in accents of mercy and of love. In the enjoyment of blessings, the soul will draw near to him in the holy communion of a joyous and heartfelt gratitude. In seasons of sorrow and affliction, it will compose itself to rest upon his bosom, in the exercise of a resigned acquiescence and a confiding trust. And in these exercises, it will enjoy the felt presence of a God of love, will experience spiritual emotions, of which no tongue can tell, and receive communications of divine influence sufficient to impart an earnest and a foretaste of heavenly bliss, even amid the trials and disappointments of earth. Such are the states of soul, in regard to God, which we should seek to attain. And if we do attain them, they will spread out over our whole characters, and bring into harmony with themselves all our feelings in regard to our fellow men, and all our views of labor and of duty.

Looking to God as our Father, we shall regard our fellow-men, of every class and condition, of every race and hue, as brethren of the same spiritual family with ourselves, to be regarded with fraternal affection, and treated with fraternal kindness. Our gratitude and love to the common Father, and our devotion to his will, will generate a deep interest in every brother of the common family. As our piety to God becomes more warm and ardent, our love to man will become more extensive in its reach, more active and energetic in its manifestation. The erring we shall seek to reclaim, the criminal to reform, the suffering to relieve, the ignorant to enlighten, the enslaved to set free. In regard to our brethren who are intemperate, who are oppressed with the heavy burden of poverty, who have fallen the victims of sin, and are branded as criminals, or those who have almost lost their manhood through the heart-withering influences of an involuntary oppression, and hopeless servitude, we shall desire, not merely to speak to them a few

kind words, not merely to afford to them some slight temporary relief; we shall desire to take them by the hand, cordially and affectionately, and raise them up to the same level, in these respects, upon which we ourselves are standing; to take them by the hand and say to them, as Peter said to Cornelius, "stand up, for we ourselves are also men," stand up in the enjoyment of liberty, in the possession of the comforts of life, of opportunities for social, intellectual and moral improvement, and be ye also men.

And then, too, in regard to the labors of life, we shall feel that they are all the allotments of our Father in Heaven, appointed as the instrumentalities of our moral and spiritual growth; and that how widely soever different pursuits may be separated from each other in the opinions of men, as honorable or dishonorable, they are all alike in the sight of God; and in the true Christian view are all placed upon the same high level, when they are performed under the influence of the same holy motive, an affectionate and conscientious regard for the will of our all-perfect Father.

With the states of soul of which I have spoken in regard to God, and in regard to our fellow-men, our union of heart with our blessed Saviour will be close and intimate; and our communion with him, delightful and improving. Our hearts will be filled with gratitude and love to him, as the sanctified and sent of the Father, as the moral manifestation of the divinity, and the living representation of perfection in humanity; as having revealed to us our Father in Heaven, rescued us from a distressing orphanage, and brought us near to him in affection and feeling, in devotion of purpose, and obedience of life. And in the enjoyment of this near communion with the pure and holy Jesus, we shall be constantly becoming more and more Christ-like in feeling and in character. We shall breathe the spirit of Christ, and speak the words of Christ, and be governed by the principles of Christ. Through the power of his life, and of his death, we shall be freed from the love of sin, and from the power of sin. We shall put on the Lord Jesus, we shall have Christ formed within us the hope of glory. I have thus pointed out the feelings and the characters which we should seek to attain, in order that the purposes of the Gospel may be fully accomplished in us as individuals. I have endeavored to show that it should be the ultimate object of each one's religious efforts to become truly Christ-like in feeling, principle and conduct, to possess and manifest his spirit of unreserved devotion to the will of God, his spirit of all-embracing and self-sacrificing love to man. When these traits are perfected in our characters, then will the final purposes of the Gospel be accomplished in regard to us as individuals. Then shall we be in the enjoyment of what is ultimate, final and absolute in religion.

To the question, Into what state should we seek to bring the community, in order that it may be in reality and in all respects a truly Chris-

tian community? I answer that communities are composed of individuals, and that the Gospel deals with communities, and accomplishes its purposes in regard to them, only as it exerts its controlling and transforming influence upon the affections, the principles and the conduct of individuals. If then, the ultimate purposes of the Gospel are accomplished in regard to the separate members of communities, as individuals, they will be in regard to the community itself, considered as a whole. The truth of this inference would seem, at first thought, to be perfectly obvious. And yet there are striking facts, evident upon the very surface of society, which seem to contradict its truth. There are professedly Christian communities, the members of which, in their individual capacity, and in the devotional aspect of their characters, seem to be truly Christian, while yet there are prevalent in these same communities many unchristian notions, practices, customs and institutions. There are nations, for example, which profess to regard themselves as the followers of the Prince of Peace, and among the members of which the Scriptures of the New Testament containing the instructions of the Saviour are freely circulated, in which they read his injunctions inculcating upon all his followers a spirit of long-suffering, forbearance under ill-treatment, and of forgiveness of enemies, while yet these nations engage in destructive wars with each other, and often too, upon the most frivolous pretences. Nay, more. They cherish, in various ways, and openly avow, and distinctly manifest the unchristian spirit of revenge. Then too, there are communities nominally Christian; and among the members of which there is undoubtedly much devotional feeling; in whose ears are often read the precepts of the Saviour, requiring his disciples to love their neighbors as themselves, and to do in all things to others, as they would have others do to them, while yet they seize upon their more ignorant and defenceless fellow-men, and *call them property*, buy them and sell them as they do their horses and their mules; beat them, and often maim them; deprive them of the means of knowledge; close against them the Volume of God's Holy Word, and compel them to contract that most holy of all earthly relations, the marriage union, without regard to the affectionate attachment upon which it should ever be based, or to dissolve it simply at the arbitrary command of another, or as fluctuations in business, or changes in property may determine. Then, still further, there are those, even in our own beloved New-England, who encourage by their indulgences, or sustain by their pursuits, customs and fashions fraught with the direst evils to the community. There are those who still continue the traffic in intoxicating drinks, by which their fellow men are reduced to a condition ten-fold worse than death; and others who by their invitations and their example, by their social drinking of wine, or their moderate indulgence in ardent spirits, are lending their influence to the encouragement, support and countenance of intemperance in our midst, while

yet they claim to be regarded as Christians. All these unchristian practices, customs and institutions, together with many others which I have not time to enumerate, prevail in communities professedly Christian, and among those who regard themselves as good and true followers of the Lord Jesus.

And not only so; there are prevalent even in Christian communities, false notions in regard to public sins and social wrongs. There are those, who, if we may judge by their conduct, seem to think that a man may be a very good Christian, and yet neglect, entirely, to carry his Christian principles and Christian spirit into his business transactions, his political efforts, or his official acts. The idea seems to be prevalent with some, that business is one thing and religion another, and a different thing; that a political caucus and a social prayer meeting are so very different, the one from the other, as to authorize, if not require entirely different principles of conduct, and an entirely different spirit. It seems to be thought that as a Christian, and in all Christian efforts, a man is bound to speak the truth, but that as a politician, and to promote the interests of his political party, he may be permitted to exaggerate, misrepresent and deceive; that as a Christian, he must do to others as he would have others do to him; but that as a man of business he may look safely to his own interests, and may take the advantage, whenever he can, of the ignorance and of the necessities of his brethren. It is by many considered as altogether unchristian for a man to meet his fellow-man in the deadly conflict of the duel, but not unchristian for the same man to use all his influence as a ruler to plunge his nation into war with a neighboring nation; as a general to lead his army to battle; or as a soldier to plunge his sword into the heart of his fellow-man. Christian principle, it seems to be thought by some, must not be applied to these positions, acts and pursuits; or if applied to them at all, it must be in some peculiar way. Indeed, attempts are made to palliate, excuse and even justify these things, and show that they are consistent with the requirements of the Gospel.

Since then there are prevalent in Christian communities many social evils and public wrongs, which seem to be inconsistent with the highest and holiest manifestations of Christian influences; something more is necessary than simply to interest individuals in their individual capacity in the claims and requirements of the Gospel. Efforts must be put forth for the especial purpose of reforming Christian communities, and banishing from them all unchristian ideas, customs, fashions and institutions. For Christianity wages a war, a war of love it is true, but at the same time, a war of uncompromising hostility, and of utter extermination against all sin, whether personal or organic, whether in the individual or in the body politic. It seeks to remove from our world all personal unholiness, all public sin, all social wrong-doing, and to fill the whole earth with purity and holiness, with peace and love. It would

do this, it is true, in its own way and by its own instrumentalities; not by harsh denunciation, not by bitter reproaches; but by the power of truth uttered in the spirit of love, by kindness in presenting and urging home upon the attention the precepts of the Gospel, united with firmness in adhering to their requisitions. Indeed, Christianity wages a war not only against the prevalent sins of a community, but also against all manifestation of an unchristian spirit, and all pursuit of unchristian measures, even in efforts to remove sin from the world. What, then, the question returns upon us, what are we to seek to accomplish in regard to any community, in order that it may be in reality and in all respects a truly Christian community? I answer that, by Christian instrumentalities, and in the exercise of a Christian spirit we are to seek to bring the community, in its associated capacity, into subjection to Christian principles, and to the manifestation of the Christian spirit in all its social efforts and public acts. We are to strive to bring about that period, when the acts of every legislative assembly shall be based upon Christian principles, shall be marked by a Christian spirit, and shall aim at Christian results; that period when the same regard for Christian principle, and the same manifestation of the Christian spirit shall characterize all political consultations and exertions, all business transactions, and all social intercourse. In short, we are to strive to hasten on that glorious period, hinted at in the prophecies of old, when men "shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; that period when they shall not hurt nor destroy in all the holy mountain of the Lord, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the seas." When any community is brought into this state, then may we feel that the ultimate purposes of the Gospel in regard to it are accomplished, and that it is in reality and in all respects truly a Christian community.

You will have observed in the remarks which have been offered upon the ultimate objects and final purposes of the Gospel, that the question, whether they are accomplished in regard to any individual or any community, will not be satisfactorily answered by the statement that certain doctrines have been embraced, certain forms of worship observed, or certain modes of Christian effort adopted. The question has reference to something above and beyond all this; it refers to the heart and the life of the individual, to the prevalent ideas, practices, customs and institutions of the community. If you ask whether the ultimate purposes of the Gospel have been accomplished in regard to an individual, it will not be a sufficient answer to say that he has embraced this or that particular form of belief, that he has connected himself with this or that Christian church, that he is constant in the observance of this or that particular form of worship. These answers relate to things which

are important in themselves, and in their influences. But they fall short of the point to which your question is directed. You wish to go beyond all these, and learn whether his having adopted and applied these instrumentalities has made him a Christ-like man in all his feelings, principles, purposes and character. If you ask whether the ultimate purposes of the Gospel have been accomplished in regard to any community, it will not be a satisfactory answer to say that they are zealous members of this or that religious sect, that they have erected many and splendid edifices of worship, that they are constant in their attendance upon social meetings for conference and prayer. You will rejoice to hear all this, and will regard it as the adoption of important religious instrumentalities. But the mere fact that these things are so, will not constitute a satisfactory answer to your question, will not reach the point to which that is directed. You wish to go farther, and ascertain whether, by the adoption of these instrumentalities, they have acquired, and are manifesting the spirit of the Gospel in all their various practices, customs and institutions. Nor yet will it be a sufficient answer to your question to say that they are earnestly devoted to the philanthropic reforms of the day; that they are zealous temperance men; earnest advocates of universal peace; decided and active Abolitionists. You will rejoice to hear this, to learn that they are engaged in the promotion of these important objects of benevolent and Christian effort. But they may be active in these philanthropic reforms, while yet in their personal and private character, they may not be Christ-like in feeling, purpose and conduct; while yet they may perhaps neglect to breathe the Christian spirit, or forget to pursue Christian measures in their efforts to remove sin and suffering from the world. You wish to know whether they unite in their characters personal purity and holiness, with warm-hearted benevolence, and active philanthropy; whether they are seeking to reform the world by the power of Christian truth, uttered in the spirit of Christian love.

I have thus endeavored to point out what is ultimate, absolute and permanent in religion; in other words, to show when the final purposes of the Gospel may be considered as accomplished in regard to individuals and communities. All else is subordinate and subsidiary to this great end. In this light principally, as instrumentalities for the accomplishment of the ultimate purposes of the Gospel, should we regard the doctrines of religion which we may embrace. The simple circumstance that, in the cold and speculative belief of the head, we have embraced this doctrine or that, will not of itself constitute us true and devoted followers of the Lord Jesus. But our belief in the doctrines of the Gospel may be improved by us to the spiritual regeneration of our hearts, to the moral purification of our lives. If I believe in God as a universal, ever-present, all-perfect Father, ordering or permitting all the events of my life in the exercise of wisdom and of love, I may im-

prove that belief as the efficient means of filling my heart with gratitude in prosperity, with trust and resignation in adversity, and with a spirit of devoted obedience in duty. If I believe in God as of purer eyes than to look with pleasure upon sin, the more I dwell upon this belief, the more shall I be filled with a holy dread of wrong-doing. If I believe in Jesus of Nazareth as an all-sufficient Saviour, the more I contemplate this soul-sustaining truth, the more entirely shall I cast myself upon him for salvation, in a life of devoted and unreserved obedience to all his instructions. If I believe that the renewing, sanctifying, enlightening and strengthening influences of the Holy Spirit will be granted to all who earnestly and fervently seek for them, I may so cherish this belief, so bring it home to my own heart and feelings, to my own wants and weaknesses, as to fill my heart with courage and confidence in all doubt and difficulty, in all duty and trial. If I believe in the common, the universal brotherhood of man, and seriously inquire for the duties which grow out of this relation, shall I not be led to cherish a more sincere and expansive regard for the whole human race? shall I not be prompted to do what may be in my power for the promotion of human happiness and improvement, for the relief of human distress, and for securing to the whole human family the enjoyment of their just rights? If I believe in my own spiritual nature, and in the immortality of the soul, shall I not be led by my belief to live more for the soul and for eternity, and less for the body and for time? If I believe that every unholy thought which may be cherished, every sinful desire which may be indulged, and every vain imagination which may be dwelt upon, will leave a stain of sinful pollution upon the soul, unfitting it for the enjoyment of God, shall I not be moved by that belief to watch most carefully over all my thoughts, feelings and affections? In this way a belief in the various doctrines of the Gospel may be so improved by us, may be so brought home to our hearts' best affections, and so applied to our own daily walk, as to become powerful instrumentalities in accomplishing within us the ultimate purposes of the Gospel, in making us truly Christ-like in feeling and character. It is in this view, as subsidiary to holiness of heart and life, that the doctrines of the Gospel are chiefly valuable. For this purpose should they be studied and embraced, to the accomplishment of this object should they be improved.

In this light also, as instrumentalities adapted to make us more pure and holy, more benevolent and philanthropic, more Christ-like in the inward states of the soul, and in the outward manifestations of character, should we regard all exercises of religious worship, and all the observance of the ordinances of religion. If you draw near to God in prayer you perform a sacred and important duty, a duty in accordance with God's will, and to the right performance of which God's promise is attached. But the chief value even of prayer is to be found in its

influences upon the soul itself, as an instrumentality in keeping alive, and strengthening within us, all devotional feelings, in bringing the soul into a Christ-like state, in rendering more permanent and powerful all religious feelings and all spiritual emotions. If, under the influence of filial love, confiding trust and sincere devotion, you draw near to God in prayer, you do by that act exercise and thereby strengthen the feelings and principles by which prayer is prompted. If, in the exercise of all-embracing love to man, you draw near to God, you have done something to deepen and strengthen that love, and to render it influential over the conduct. If, with a holy dread of sin, you ask of God heavenly guidance and spiritual strength, you have, by the very supplication you have offered, increased and rendered more efficient your abhorrence of every thing wrong. In this way, every act of prayer and of praise is instrumental in keeping alive, in rendering brighter and warmer, the flame of pure devotion in the soul. In this way, is God's promise to hear and answer prayer verified to the soul of him who prays. Prayer is a privilege, a precious, a glorious privilege, in which frail, fallible, erring, sinful man is permitted to hold communion with the infinite, all-perfect and holy One. The practice of prayer is a solemn duty, to the performance of which we are bound by the strongest obligations of dependence, of gratitude, and of hope. The answer to prayer is so experienced when it is blessed to the purification of the soul, the elevation and enlargement of the affections, and the confirmation of all holy and virtuous principles. Would that we might all cherish a more just appreciation of the preciousness of prayer, both private and social, as a privilege, of its importance as a duty, and of its value as an instrumentality for the promotion of purity of heart and holiness of life.

In the same light are we to regard the observance of the ordinances of religion. These were appointed by Christ, who knew what was in man, in adaptation to our weakness and our spiritual wants. The request "this do in remembrance of me," is a most tender and touching request, addressed to the deepest affections of the heart, coming as it does from one, who was ready to lay down his life for our salvation. But one of the most endearing views of this ordinance is that which regards it as appointed to become a help to our weakness, and an instrument of our spiritual strength and growth. Here we are, weak and frail, with appetites and passions requiring control, surrounded with temptations difficult to withstand, driven by the labors and distracted by the cares of earth. How kind and gracious is our Saviour, to establish this ordinance, so well adapted, in all the holy associations by which it is surrounded, in all the touching reminiscences which it awakens, and in all the spiritual influences which flow from it, to strengthen us in our weakness, to sustain us under our trials, and to help forward our constantly increasing preparation for heavenly bliss.

Will not all who love the Lord Jesus, rejoice to comply with his tender request, come to the table of remembrance, and secure the influence of an appropriate and powerful religious instrumentality, adapted to perfect them in all the virtues and graces of the Christian walk? But let no one think that he has done all, when he has seated himself at the table of remembrance, and partaken of the emblems of Christ's body and blood. If you have done this, you have reason to bless God that you have been enabled to avail yourselves of a powerful instrumentality, which, if improved aright, may essentially aid you in your endeavors to become truly Christ-like in feeling and in character. If, as you draw near to the table of remembrance, you consider the evil of sin, its hatefulness in the sight of God, its polluting and debasing influence upon the human soul; if you consider the worth of your own spiritual nature, as indicated by the provision which God has made for its deliverance from sin, and by the sufferings the Saviour was willing to endure for its salvation; if, as you are seated at the table, you dwell upon the disclosures, the precepts, the example of Christ, devout gratitude will be awakened in your hearts, your souls will be filled with holy, spiritual aspirations, and you will be led, at every successive observance of the ordinance, to renew your consecration of yourselves to the service of your God, in the Gospel of his Son. In this way, your observance of the ordinance of the supper will become a constantly operating instrumentality for the promotion of your personal religious improvement. It is for this, among other reasons, that this ordinance should be highly valued, and to this end more especially should it be observed and improved.

And, finally, correct moral conduct, valuable as it is in life, important as it is to the community, derives its chief value to the individual himself, from being regarded as instrumental to something higher, more important and more enduring than itself. The community, it is true, cannot look beyond the outward conduct. If that is in accordance with Gospel precepts, the purposes of the Gospel, so far as the community is concerned, are accomplished. But with the individual the outward conduct derives its character and its value from the motive by which it is prompted, and from being regarded principally as a manifestation of the state of the heart. An act of friendship may be very important in itself, but it will be valued principally as an indication of a friendly state of the affections. And especially to the individual who performs the act, will its value depend upon its being a true manifestation of his feelings. For its reflex influence upon his own soul will depend upon this, since it is only as a true manifestation of the affections that it can exercise them, and by exercising deepen and strengthen them, and render them more powerful and influential. So an act of moral honesty, of long-suffering, forbearance, of kindness in social intercourse, a course of unswerving devotion to duty amid diffi-

culties and in the face of obstacles, will be chiefly regarded by the individual who performs and pursues them, as a manifestation of the state of his feelings and principles, and will be especially valued because by exercising they strengthen right feelings and principles, and in this way promote the religious improvement of the soul. Perhaps I may differ from others in the view I take of moral conduct as instrumental of spiritual growth. But it seems to me a very important view, tending to enhance the value and importance of correct moral conduct, and to expose an error which sometimes prevails in regard to it. For surely when it is considered that every instance of correct moral deportment exerts an influence for good, and every instance of moral delinquency exerts an influence for evil, upon the spiritual and immortal nature, the importance of pursuing the one and avoiding the other, will be enhanced in our estimation. Correct moral conduct will be valued, not merely for what it is in itself, and in its influence upon standing and reputation in the community, but, more especially, for what it is in its influence upon the soul itself, in advancing its preparation for the enjoyment of God's presence. Then too there is an error abroad in regard to the sufficiency of correct moral conduct in securing eternal bliss. The question is often asked, "if a man be a correct moral man, is not that sufficient? What matter if he be not a devout, holy, spiritually-minded man?" To the community it may not matter; for devoutness of affections, holiness of heart, spirituality of mind lie beyond the cognizance of the community. But to the individual himself it will be a matter of the utmost importance, since the true value of his correctness of moral conduct in the sight of God, and its beneficial effect upon his own soul will depend upon the motives by which it is prompted, upon its being based upon and proceeding from high, holy, spiritual feelings and principles. The honesty of the truly religious man may not be of more value to the community than the honesty of the irreligious man, excepting as it is based upon a more fixed principle, and is therefore more to be depended upon. But to the individual himself, a simple act of honesty proceeding from religious principle, is of tenfold more value, is vastly more beneficial in its reflex influence upon his own soul, than the same act of honesty performed under the influence of a lower, a worldly motive. It seems to me important, then, that we should look upon even outward moral conduct as instrumental in its relation to the soul, and the soul's best welfare.

The views which I have in this discourse advanced, I believe to be of the utmost importance in their practical bearings. There is, with many, a tendency to idolize means and instrumentalities, and to rest satisfied with an outward attention to them, without even inquiring whether they have exerted or are exerting their appropriate influence upon the heart and life. Are there not many who rejoice to be called by this or that sectarian name, and congratulate themselves that they have embraced this or that system of doctrines; are there not many

who attend regularly upon the services of the Sabbath; are there not some who seat themselves from time to time at the table of remembrance, and who feel that simply in consequence of these acts they are more acceptable in the sight of God and more certain of heavenly happiness, without asking whether their attention to these instrumentalities is making them better men, more pure in heart, more holy in life? Are there not many who rejoice in the moral correctness of their outward conduct, and feel that this is all that is necessary to secure for them the enjoyment of heavenly blessedness, while yet they ask not whether the heart be right with God, whether the soul be in a pure, holy and spiritual frame? It is important, then, that we should have a clear conception of the precise objects we are to seek, in our attention to religious instrumentalities, both in regard to ourselves, and in regard to the community around us. Then shall we understand in what way all these instrumentalities are to be employed and improved. The doctrines we embrace will no longer remain mere intellectual abstractions, they will become living principles of action, and their influence upon the heart and the life will be distinctly manifested in the daily walk and conversation. Our forms of worship and our observance of the ordinances of religion will cease to be mere formalities. They will become occasions of holy communion with God and of spiritual fellowship with Christ, and with one another, seasons of refreshment from the Lord, when Christian principles are strengthened, religious feelings deepened, and heavenward aspirations rendered more ardent. And our correctness of moral deportment will cease to be a mere conformity with outward rules of propriety, and will become the manifestation and the exercise of our fixed principles of devotion to God and of benevolence to man. It will no longer be a matter of mere worldly policy, it will become a matter of conscience and of duty, instrumental of the soul's developement and growth in all that is pure, lovely and of good report.

Then again there is a tendency, with some, to undervalue the doctrines of the Gospel, the exercises of worship, the ordinances of religion. If an individual have love to man and love to God, what matter, say some, whether he embrace one system of doctrines or another, or whether he have any religious belief at all, what matter whether he pray or neglect prayer, whether he seat himself at the table of remembrance or turn away from it? In this query it is forgotten that these things, truths believed, worship offered, ordinances observed, are the means, the instruments of holiness. The views I have advanced, if true, will serve to enhance in our estimation the value of all these. We shall regard them, not merely as they are in themselves, but as they are in relation to spiritual growth and eternal happiness. The more we value these, the more ardent our desire for spiritual improvement and eternal bliss, the more earnestly shall we seek for a pure faith, a sincere worship, a devout observance of the ordinances. In

this connection we hear of "the transient and the permanent in Christianity." A belief in the miraculous origin of our religion is placed among the things which are transient, and which are destined to pass away, while purity of heart and holiness of life, love to God, and love to man are justly regarded as absolute and permanent. It is sometimes asked if the soul is sustained upon the bed of death by a belief in the miraculous origin of our religion, rather than by its own holy union with God through the power of faith and love. The proper answer to this question is, that a belief in the miraculous origin and divine authority of our religion, has been the instrument of bringing the soul into this holy union. What may perhaps with truth be regarded as in itself transient becomes of vast importance and of permanent value from its connection with what is ultimate and absolute. And then too, that which is transient with the individual becomes permanent with the community and the race. It is with the individual an instrumentality to a permanent end. As an instrumentality, it is needed by all other members of the community, who have not enjoyed it, and will be as important to them as it has been to those who have already experienced its beneficial influences. As an instrumentality, it will be as important to all succeeding generations, as it has been to those which have gone before. It is then only from the vast and unspeakable importance of the ends they are intended to accomplish, that the true value of all religious instrumentalities is to be learned. While therefore we should ever assign them their true place, as *instrumentalities*, we should also assign them their true value, enhanced as it is by their relation to the spiritual growth and eternal welfare of the soul.

My friends of this religious society, I have supposed that the subject of my discourse, and the remarks which I have offered might not be inappropriate to this occasion. As my brother, this day, takes upon him, more formally, the vows of that ministry among you, to which you have invited him, you will perceive that in his labors, you are henceforth to enjoy an important religious instrumentality. But remember, I beseech you, that it depends much upon the light in which you may regard that instrumentality, and the manner in which you may improve it, whether its influence upon you shall be for your good or for your hurt; that the word preached will not profit unless it be mixed with faith in the hearers. You will bear it in mind that your pastor comes among you, not that he may be religious in your stead, but that, under God's guidance and with God's blessing, he may aid you in your endeavors to work out your own salvation. He comes, not that he may stand between you and your God, between you and your Saviour, but that he may conduct you, in your own persons, to a near, intimate and holy union of heart with your Saviour and your God. Receive, then, your pastor to your hearts. Give him your confidence, and your affections. Let your regard for him be manifested by your warm-hearted and active co-operation with him in every good word and

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work; by your attendance upon the institutions and the ordinances of the Gospel, by the purity and holiness of your hearts, the uprightness and integrity of your lives, and the expansion of your philanthropic affections. Seek to build up for yourselves, in peace and harmony, by prayer and by effort, that kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, which your pastor will strive, as an instrument in God's hand, to build up among you. By so doing, you will secure the blessed influences of God's Holy Spirit, and will receive the "end of your faith," the end of all your labors and efforts, the end of all the religious instrumentalities with which you are favored, "even the salvation of your souls."

And, my brother, the views which I have presented, place, as it seems to me, that blessed ministry of reconciliation, in which we have been permitted to take part, upon its truest and most exalted foundation. We are instruments in the hands of God, laboring to accomplish his holy purposes on earth, beseeching our fellow-men "in Christ's stead to be reconciled to our Father in heaven." Regarding our ministry as a divinely appointed instrumentality for the accomplishment of high and holy purposes among men, we shall look to God for guidance in our course, for strength with which to labor, and for that blessing without which all our efforts will be in vain. With these views I extend to you this right hand of Christian fellowship, and, in the name of our common Christianity, bid you welcome to this part of our Lord's vineyard on the earth. You come among this people, not that you may preach yourself, but that you may preach "Christ and him crucified;" not to make your hearers proselytes to your own peculiar opinions, but that you may lead them to your Master, that they may learn of him. You come among them not that you may display your learning or talents, but that, consecrating them to God and to Christ as instrumentalities for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, they may be all employed in setting forth the riches of the Gospel of God's grace. Having been led by God's grace to desire a part in this ministry, to share in this instrumentality for the good of your fellow-men, and having been guided by God's Providence to this field of labor, I would renewedly welcome you to all the hopes and joys, to all the labors and results of your ministry here. And, while I would pledge to you the sympathy, the counsels, the prayers of your brethren in the ministry, and would express to you the desire that you in return may be to us as a brother, true and faithful, I would bid you God speed in your work, with the prayer that, at the close of your ministry here, whether it may be of longer or of shorter duration, you may enjoy the greatest consolation, which a true minister of the Lord Jesus can experience, in the thought that, through God's grace, you have been an efficient instrument in his hands, in building up the Redeemer's kingdom of righteousness, joy and peace among this people.